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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Report on Assessments
2014-78 (SB 812), sec.5

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Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on Assessments

Per 2014-78 (Senate Bill 812), Section 5, “The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2015, on the acquisition and implementation of a new assessment instrument or instruments to assess student achievement on the academic standards adopted pursuant to G.S. §115C-12(9c). The State Board shall not acquire or implement the assessment instrument or instruments without the enactment of legislation by the General Assembly authorizing the purchase. The assessment instrument or instruments shall be nationally normed, aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and field tested. Examples of appropriate assessment models would include, but not be limited to, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), ACT Aspire, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).” In response to that directive, this report provides a status update on the State Board of Education’s consideration of the implementation of new assessments.

In February 2014, the State Board of Education (SBE) decided to continue through the 2016–17 school year with the current assessments, which are aligned to the adopted content standards and which meet state and federal requirements for reporting student achievement and growth. To research assessment options, the SBE convened a Task Force on Summative Assessment in October 2014. The SBE received the Task Force on Summative Assessment Report on July 9, 2015 (Appendix A). With this input and with their continued discussion, the Board is considering the optimal assessment system for North Carolina to implement beginning in the 2017–18 school year. This timeline allows for thorough review of any assessment instrument or design. Also, the timeline will allow schools to have consistent data on the current state-developed assessments. First administered in the 2012–13 school year, these assessments have college and career ready academic performance standards and have been acknowledged as being closely aligned to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) performance standards, as required by state statute (G.S. §115C-105.40).

Grades 3–8 Assessments

Presently, the following proposals are being considered:

1. Conduct a study during the 2015–16 school year to determine the feasibility of administering through course assessments in English language arts/reading and mathematics in grades 3–8. The study will include 5th grade mathematics and 6th grade English language arts/reading.
2. Review current locally administered interim assessments for appropriateness as a grade-level content standards measure.
3. At the conclusion of 2015–16, the SBE will review findings from the study and the locally administered commercial products. Depending on the SBE’s decision following their review, a field test may be administered in 2016–17 or a Request for Proposals may be released.

High School Assessments

As recommended by the Task Force, the State Board may release a Request for Proposals in the fall of 2015 to determine the availability of other college and career readiness assessments (grades 9–11) for implementation in 2017–18. The adopted assessments would provide national comparisons, align with the North Carolina content standards, and meet state and federal

requirements for reporting student achievement and growth. The grade 11 assessment would provide a college admission score. Additionally the Task Force recommended continuing a grade 12 assessment that provides a career readiness measure for students who are Career and Technical Education concentrators.

As required by G.S. §115C-83.15, as part of the School Performance Grades, The ACT is administered to all students in grade 11 membership annually. This assessment provides a comparison to other states participating in The ACT as well as benchmarks for college and career readiness. As required by law, the State Board will continue to administer this nationally normed assessment.

The SBE must submit a recommendation to the General Assembly in 2016 to enact legislation to authorize a purchase of the implementation of a new assessment instrument or instruments as for the 2017–18 school year.

Task Force on Summative Assessment

Report to the North Carolina State Board of Education

Assessment Recommendations

June 2015

Task Force Membership

- The goal for membership on the Task Force on Summative Assessment Committee was to include individuals with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences with public education and the community. Mr. A.L. “Buddy” Collins, Vice Chair of the State Board of Education and Dr. Olivia Holmes Oxendine, Board Member, State Board of Education were named Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Task Force. State Superintendent Dr. June St. Clair Atkinson also served on the Task Force. Other Task Force members included local school district K–12 superintendents, principals, and teachers. Additionally, testing and accountability, higher education, local school board, parent, and business professional vantage points were represented on the Task Force: Ms. Erin Beale, Mathematics Teacher, Davis Drive Middle School, Wake County Schools
- Ms. Pam Biggs, Exceptional Children Consultant, Johnston County Schools
- Dr. Lisa Chapman, Senior Vice President/Chief Academic Officer, North Carolina Community College System
- Mr. Todd Davis, North Carolina Business Committee on Education Board Member/Century Link Incorporated
- Ms. Ilina Ewen, Marketing Consultant/Parent Representative
- Dr. Wayne Foster, Director, STAR 3 Project, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

- ☛ Ms. Krystal Harris, Third Grade Teacher, Fairview Heights Elementary School, Richmond County Schools
- ☛ Mr. Butch Hudson, Northeast Regional Accountability Coordinator
- ☛ Ms. Anna Jarrett, Middle and High School District Lead Mathematics Teacher, Duplin County Schools
- ☛ Mr. Michael Landers, English Teacher, Mount Pleasant High School, Cabarrus County Schools
- ☛ Mr. Joe Maimone, Headmaster, Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy
- ☛ Mr. Larry Obeda, Principal, Lumberton High School, Public Schools of Robeson County
- ☛ Ms. Jennifer Robinson, Principal, Westwood Elementary School, Ashe County Schools
- ☛ Ms. Roberta Scott, President-Elect, North Carolina School Boards Association/Warren County Schools
- ☛ Dr. Robert Taylor, Superintendent, Bladen County Schools
- ☛ Dr. Frank Till, Superintendent, Cumberland County Schools
- ☛ Dr. Miriam Wagner, Dean, School of Education, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- ☛ Ms. Hannah Youngblood, Testing/Accountability Director, Johnston County Schools

Mr. Martez Hill, Executive Director, Office of the State Board of Education, Dr. Audrey Martin-McCoy, Policy Analyst, Office of the State Board of Education, and Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Data, Research, and Policy, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), served as staff to the Task Force on Summative Assessment.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION AND TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In January 2014, the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) authorized Chairman William Cobey to establish and appoint the Task Force on Summative Assessment for the purpose of examining the administration of state summative assessments for student accountability in school year 2016–17 and beyond. Representing several interested stakeholder groups, the Task Force began meeting in small and large groups in the fall of 2014. These meetings provided opportunities to exchange professional perspectives, to examine and discuss reports and presentations, and to formulate recommendations. Part I of this report presents the recommendations of the Task Force and the details of two assessment approaches: (1) a through-course assessment (periodic testing on the academic content standards in three or four intervals during the school year in grades 3–8) and (2) a nationally normed assessment suite for grades 9–11. The underpinning research of the recommendations and further details about the two assessment approaches (grades 3–8 and grades 9–11) comprise Part II of the report. The activities of the Task Force, including external presentations and concluding comments, appear in Part III of the report. The Appendices provides background information for the recommendations found in the report.

Task Force Recommendations

According to S.L. 2014-78§ 5 (SB 812), the SBE shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2015, on the acquisition and implementation of a new assessment instrument or instruments to assess student achievement on the academic standards adopted pursuant to G.S. §115C-12(9c). The State Board shall not acquire or implement the assessment instrument or instruments without the enactment of legislation by the General Assembly authorizing the purchase. The assessment instrument(s) shall be nationally normed, field tested, and aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Grades 3–8 Recommendation

The Task Force recommends implementing a proof of concept study in 2015–16 in selected school districts to determine the feasibility of administering a through-course assessment model consisting of three or four tests that will occur over the school year. If approved by the SBE, these assessments would replace local interim or benchmarks assessments that districts currently administer as tools for monitoring student, grade, school, and district progress toward standards-driven goals. The timely data obtained from through-course assessments will inform instruction, improve the allocation of time and resources, and redirect professional development initiatives.

If the findings support the through-course model as a technically sound approach for measuring annual student proficiency and student growth while meeting state and federal accountability purposes, including accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners (ELLs), the SBE

may consider eliminating End-of-Grade assessments and adopting nationally normed tests in English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading and mathematics in grades 3- 8.

The Task Force recommends a three-year plan for studying student assessment in grades 3–8. In short, the study will examine the extent to which a series of segmented assessments capture a valid and reliable picture of student achievement throughout and at the end of the school year. Determining the operational and technical feasibility of this model will be a critical part of the study. The NCDPI will select a randomized sample for participation, solicit feedback on the design of the study from the North Carolina Technical Advisors, and present the findings to the SBE in summer 2016. In order to obtain valid and reliable information about the through course model, the Task Force recommends that schools participating in the study not administer local benchmark/interim assessments. The findings from the study will inform the decisions of the State Board of Education regarding future test development.

Also, in 2015–16, the NCDPI will examine commercial instruments and determine the extent to which these assessments satisfy North Carolina’s content standards and specific psychometric requirements. With several school districts currently administering commercially developed assessments, it is possible to conduct a review of the assessment data from previous End-of-Grade (EOG) administrations. This will allow the NCDPI to determine whether commercial assessments align with state summative assessments in coverage of content standards, reliability, and validity. In order to accomplish this review, the NCDPI will request school systems to submit historical data from commercial assessments and determine the extent to which the technical integrity compares with state-developed EOG tests.

Grades 3–8 Implementation Plan

2015–16

- (1) Implement a proof of concept (POC) study to determine whether the through-course assessment model is technically sound and operationally feasible. The data resulting from these assessments will inform teachers as they reflect critically on their instructional practices and adjust their strategies accordingly. In addition, the NCDPI will study these data giving special attention to reporting requirements set forth in state and federal laws. Participating school districts will administer both the through-course assessments and a modified (shorter) EOG test during 2015–16. The study will include fifth grade mathematics and sixth grade ELA/Reading.
- (2) Examine commercial assessments systems and the extent to which these assessments satisfy North Carolina content standards and specific psychometric features. The NCDPI will collect historical assessment data from school districts that routinely administer commercially-developed assessments in prior years and analyze the results for standards alignment, validity, and reliability.

- 3) At the conclusion of 2015–16, the SBE will review findings from the study and the locally administered commercial products. Depending on the SBE’s decision following their review, a field test may be administered in 2016-17 or a Request for Proposals may be released.

2016–17

Conduct a field test in grades 3–8 (ELA/Reading and mathematics) based on the results from the through-course study, or release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a grades 3–8 national assessment suite that aligns with the rigorous college and career-ready standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

2017–18

Depending on State Board approval, administer a new student assessment program.

Grades 3–8 Implementation Overview

Year	Administration	Grade Levels	Purpose
2015–16	Implement Proof of Concept study	Grade 5: Math Grade 6: ELA/Reading	Determine feasibility of Proof of Concept
2015–16	Examine commercially-developed assessment instruments	Grades 3–8	Determine the extent to which these assessments satisfy North Carolina content standards and specific psychometric features
2016–17	Either proceed with a field test of the through-course model, or release a request for proposals for a national-normed assessment	Grades 3–8: Math Grades 3–8: ELA/Reading	Ensure national-normed assessments meet technical requirements and state and federal accountability standards
2017-18	Administer new assessment	Grades 3–8	Ensure assessments provide information on student performance in a manner that will impact instructional decisions

Grades 9-11 Recommendation

The Task Force recommends a national assessment suite for ELA/Reading, mathematics, and science. Administered as pre-tests in grades 9 and 10, these assessments will target content skills that students must master before post-testing occurs in grade 11. This approach will accommodate comparative analyses of student achievement data, provide indicators of college-and-career readiness, and satisfy state and federal accountability

requirements, including appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are ELLs. Given that the ACT assessment suite (ACT Explore and ACT Plan) will not be available after 2015-16, the State Board of Education may consider authorizing the NCDPI to explore the market for other nationally normed assessment tools. Additionally, the Task Force recommends administering a national career-readiness assessment to students who complete a concentration in the Career and Technical Education curriculum.

Grades 9-11 Implementation Plan

2015–16

Release an RFP for a grades 9–11 assessment suite that aligns with academic content standards and measures career-and-college readiness. The grades 9 and 10 assessment must provide diagnostic information for teachers to improve instruction. Determining career-and-college readiness will reflect performance on grade 11 assessments.

2016–17

Conduct a statewide pilot of the proposed assessments to ensure the capacity of the tools to satisfy all state and federal requirements. Concurrently, the NCDPI will conduct information meetings and provide training opportunities to help teachers, parents, and school administrators understand the possible transition from EOG tests to the new assessment protocol. During 2016-17, a method for determining a grade 11 proficiency score will be identified and presented to the State Board of Education for approval.

2017-18

Implement the new assessment suite in grades 9–11 and use the grade 11 assessment as the accountability measure.

Grades 9-11 Implementation Overview

Year	Administration	Purpose
2015-16	Release a request for proposals	Ensure national assessments meet technical requirements and state and federal accountability standards
2016-17	Conduct statewide pilot test and establish method to determine student proficiency using grade 11 test data	Ensure national assessments meet technical requirements and state and federal accountability standards
2017-18	Implement new assessments in grades 9-11	Full Implementation

PART II: REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE ON SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Background

In July 2014, the General Assembly adopted and the Governor signed Senate Bill 812 (S.L. 2014-78§ 5) directing the SBE to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2015, on the acquisition and implementation of a new assessment instrument(s) to assess student achievement on the academic standards adopted pursuant to G.S. §115C-12(9c). The SBE is granted the authority to review the standards of other states and national assessments aligned with those standards and shall implement the assessments it deems most aligned to assess state academic achievement content standards in accordance to the law. The State Board shall not acquire or implement the assessment instrument(s) without the enactment of legislation by the General Assembly authorizing the purchase. The assessment instrument or instruments shall be nationally normed, field tested, and aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Task Force Charge

In 2014, the State Board Education charged the Task Force to examine the purpose of federal, state, and local assessment requirements and offer recommendations on a best course of action for measuring student achievement while protecting teachers' instructional time, realizing that achieving the right balance is paramount. A balanced and coherent assessment system should align with content standards, instructional practices, and assessment activities and provide timely, reliable student achievement and growth information to classroom teachers and school leaders in their efforts to improve instructional programs for all students.

As the Task Force discussed recommendations, the following options emerged:

- Continue the current system of state-developed End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) tests in ELA/Reading and mathematics;
- Utilize a consortium-developed summative assessment system such as Smarter Balanced Assessments or Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC); and
- Purchase a commercially designed assessment system such as ACT, SAT, or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Conceptual Framework

The Task Force on Summative Assessment recognizes that content standards form the basis of the instructional program, with student assessment comprising one important component of the teaching/learning process. The Task Force also acknowledges that an assessment protocol must achieve several goals with student performance serving as the unifying purpose. The strength of any assessment program depends on balance and interdependence, meaning that all steps must form a cohesive system from which teachers, school leaders, parents, students, and education policy makers receive systematic information about the performance of students. Three distinct levels comprise a balanced system: (1) formative, (2) interim, and (3) summative.

A formative assessment (the first level) provides actionable feedback regarding student, small group, and/or whole-class performance. These assessments occur in the natural context of teaching and have no bearing on school accountability (Perie, Marion, and Gong, 2009). Extensive research on assessment and learning shows that skilled use of formative assessment by teachers has a significant positive impact on student learning (Black & William, 1998; Heritage, 2007; Stiggins & DuFour, 2009). An interim assessment is designed to evaluate the progress of students with respect to a given set of content standards. Determined in advance, teachers know where in their curricula and for what length of time to focus their instruction. Since assessing common standards is the focus of the interim protocol, school districts often aggregate and report school-level results. Given a specific end point (e.g., grade-reporting cycle, semester, or year), a summative assessment captures the outcomes of continuous teaching and learning. When administered as standardized tests, summative tools inform educators, the public, and policy makers about the extent to which large numbers of students have reached proficiency on state-adopted content standards. Unlike formative and interim assessments, the summative protocol has state-level accountability implications, as well as large-scale comparative value.

Guiding Beliefs and Principles

During ongoing discussions about the purpose and desired attributes in a state-level assessment, the Task Force emphasized the following beliefs and principles:

- Academic standards drive instructional content and serve as the basis of assessment.

- The alignment of content standards, daily instruction, and all levels of assessment benefits teachers and students.
- An assessment system should provide feedback that improves instruction.
- Teachers and school leaders deserve timely student achievement information to make decisions about student learning.
- Interim assessments have the potential to influence instructional practices as compared to summative assessments, which are designed for accountability purposes.
- An assessment system must address the diversity of learners in classrooms. This range includes students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and the academically gifted students.
- Student assessment systems must reflect well-established principles of child growth and development.
- Technology will enhance teachers' efforts to embed interim assessments as part of routine instructional delivery.

Additionally, the Task Force agrees that multiple measures should be used to determine a school's effectiveness. The members, however, debated strategies for using assessments to measure teacher effectiveness, with some members stressing the importance of empowering school leaders to use school-level growth data as a proven strategy to strengthen teams of teachers and professional learning communities, while some members emphasized the value of school leaders having individual teacher growth data to identify effective and ineffective teachers. The Task Force did not reach a consensus recommendation on using assessment data to measure teacher effectiveness.

Defining a Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System

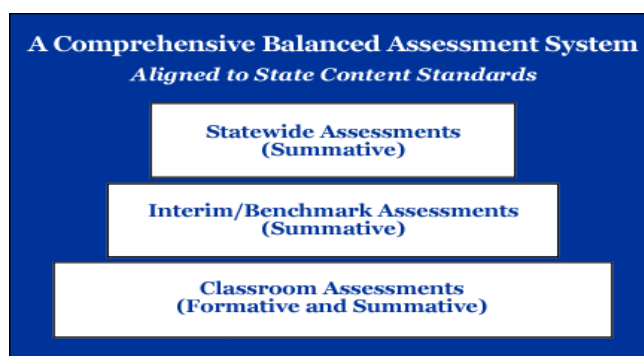
A comprehensive balanced assessment system is a multi-tiered approach for gathering proficiency data in areas of state and/or national standards. Heretofore, North Carolina has relied on summative (e.g., EOG/EOC) assessments to meet state and federal requirements. Coupled with summative tests developed by the NCDPI, school districts also examine formative and interim assessment data to determine student performance at the skill/competency level. In preparing students for these assessments, teachers generally follow a common pacing guide.

Based on the work of Gong (2010), an assessment system is considered balanced and coherent when content standards, instructional practices, and assessment activities result in reliable information about the academic achievement of students. Additionally, a balanced system appropriately weights the distribution of learning to support accountability needs. A comprehensive, balanced assessment system also provides customized information required by different levels of the educational system. For example, formative information is crucial for revising/modifying daily instruction, yet these data satisfy no state and national reporting requirements.

Formative, Interim, and Summative Assessments

Conceptually, a balanced assessment system resembles building blocks, with classroom/formative assessments forming the lowest level. Interim assessments, or the second level provide systematic information to educators regarding student performance at the school and district levels. The top level consists of statewide assessments, which offer a final opportunity for students to demonstrate academic proficiency across the content standards. Figure 1 depicts a comprehensive assessment system.

Figure 1. A Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System



One purpose of assessment is to capture student learning at the closest point of instruction and to utilize the results to guide instructional adjustments. This process is defined as formative assessment and is described “as encompassing all activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which serve as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities...” Black and Wiliam (1998, p.7). Formative assessment often occurs within and between lessons and can be considered a “pulse check,” alerting teachers and students of learning gaps. Formative assessment and daily instruction must operate seamlessly, or the result of fragmented feedback will undermine strategies to assist students. Moreover, timely data empower students to evaluate their own learning. In short, formative assessment allows teachers and students to recognize, respond, and improve learning as it is occurring (Cowie & Bell, 1999; Looney, 2005).

An assessment also captures student learning at specific intervals or “along the way.” This type of assessment is defined as a benchmark, or an interim assessment. Critical to progress monitoring, interim assessment tools may be developed by individual teachers, school and district teams, state-level committees, or private vendors. Multiple assessment administration occurs at strategic points during the school year (e.g., beginning, middle, and end). Oftentimes, interim assessments are used to predict “end-of-year” results (Gong, 2010). Darling-Hammond and Pecheone (2010) propose that interim assessments propel instruction and track student performance over time.

Depending on the test developer, assessments will vary with respect to targeting and evaluating content standards. This variability creates challenges for school districts when they unknowingly purchase poorly aligned vendor-developed assessments. While school districts may receive information on student growth for specific skills, school leaders may not see significant gains in year-end scores on state summative assessments. Like North Carolina, many states offer school systems item banks to customize standards-based assessments; however, the benefits of using these instruments independently are minimal. A possible solution would involve the NCDPI assuming the responsibility for sequencing standards-based interim assessment items. When test items are sequenced well, teachers gain a deep understanding of standards organization, which results in effective planning, pacing, and progress monitoring

The Through-Course Assessment Model

Under consideration by the Task Force, the through-course model is comprised of multiple standards-based tests (three or four) that schools administer over several months. The quick turnaround of results from each assessment is intended to help teachers identify degrees of student mastery given specific sets of content standards. Depending on carefully controlled psychometric standards, through-course data could satisfy state and federal reporting requirements. In the literature, the through-course design is promoted as the “next generation” trend in bridging interim assessment with summative assessment. Darling-Hammond and Pecheone (2010) offer the following perspective on “medium stakes” versus high stakes.

We would argue, as economist Richard Murnane suggested in his study of Vermont’s assessment system (Murnane & Levy, 1996), that medium stakes can be preferable to high stakes of the kind that often lead to unintended negative consequences for student participation in school and teachers’ instructional practices. That is, the use of rich assessments to inform stakeholders about educational performance (both because what students know and can do is made visible and because it produces useful, interpretable scores) can produce significant attention to educational improvement and support, as well as needed information for teachers, parents, policymakers, colleges, and employers” (p. 27).

For several years, state-led assessment consortia (e.g., Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers/PARCC) have shown an interest in the through-course assessment design. At the same time, these consortia have acknowledged that students require maximum instructional time to study and apply rigorous standards before assessment occurs (Wise, 2011). In a through-course model, the continuous cycle of administering assessments is likely to interfere “time to task” learning opportunities for students. In a similar vein, consortia have expressed concerns that through-course assessment data could possibly underestimate the impact of a full year of standard-based instruction. Although these concerns are acknowledged in the literature, the Task Force believes that

through-course model will minimize pressure on students, teachers, schools, and districts, since multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency will occur throughout the year.

As the SBE has been tasked by the General Assembly to implement assessments that allow for national comparisons aligned to content standards, focus placed on redefining the testing program to include room for innovative interim through-course assessment design in easing pressures placed on summative assessments is a logical next step in moving toward a balanced assessment approach. It also serves in alleviating the need for school systems to incur the costs and time associated with administering multiple interim assessments in preparation for annual state summative assessments

A Close Look at Grades 3–8

In order to assist schools in responding to the instructional needs of all students, the Task Force proposes the administration of a through-course assessment model. Ideally, this approach could eliminate local assessments; however, the Task Force is not taking a definitive stand on local interim assessments, except to advise school leaders to give careful consideration to the technical integrity and alignment strength of assessment tools, both locally and commercially designed systems.

Data derived from through-course assessments will guide teachers’ pedagogical practices, inform instructional adjustments, and improve the allocation of resources and time. If the through-course model proves to be technically sound, operationally feasible, and responsive to state and federal reporting requirements, the SBE may consider eliminating the North Carolina EOG tests. A decision of this importance could possibly require the General Assembly to enact new legislation on the means and purposes of measuring student achievement in the public schools. The following diagram summarizes the grades 3-8 proposal.

Assessment Recommendation for Grades 3–8	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Three or four interim assessments are administered throughout the year for ELA/Reading, and Mathematics. ☛ Content standards are sequenced across three or four assessments. ☛ Grade-level proficiency is demonstrated by meeting standards across several assessments. ☛ A growth status is based on student data gathered across several assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Reduces local assessments required by school districts ☛ Provides immediate feedback to determine learning gaps ☛ Could eliminate the need for the current summative/EOG tests

Educators depend on immediate test results to adjust and improve instruction. With results provided throughout the school year, an assessment system with a through-course design can guide instructional practices and diagnose student learning along the way.

A Close Look at Grades 9-11

The Task Force recommends a national assessment suite for ELA/Reading, mathematics, and science. Administered as diagnostic pre-tests in grades 9 and 10, these assessments will target content skills and knowledge that students must master before post-testing occurs in grade 11. The goal is to implement an approach that will allow for comparative analyses of student achievement data; provide indicators of college-and career-readiness; and satisfy state and federal accountability requirements, including provisions for students with disabilities and students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Additionally, the Task Force recommends administering a national college-and-career readiness assessment to students completing coursework in the Career Technical Education curriculum. Currently, the state administers two diagnostic assessments: 1) the ACT Explore in grade 8 and 2) the ACT Plan in grade 10. School year 2015-16, however, is the last release of the ACT Explore and ACT Plan, thus requiring the State Board of Education to consider other high school assessment systems. The following diagram summarizes the high school proposal.

Assessment Recommendation at High School	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National assessment suite aligned to academic content standards to determine college readiness. The pre-test results in grades 9 and 10 will determine student growth after completing the post test in grade 11. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides diagnostic information to empower instructional and learning practices • Gives comparisons of North Carolina students to students in other states • Meets state law requirements for a national assessment • Used as a factor to determine admission to colleges and universities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National career-readiness assessment administered to CTE concentrators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized in the business/industry as an indicator of being career ready

Components of the Three-year Study

The Task Force on Summative Assessment recommends a study of a through-grades assessment model for grades 3-8 (ELA/Reading and mathematics). The Task Force also recommends a trial period for new assessments at grades 9–11 and adequate time for determining a grade 11 proficiency score.

The assessment findings will help to answer questions regarding the through-course model as a way to improve student proficiency in the ELA/Reading and mathematics standards. For grades 3–8, the study will help to determine whether the data satisfy critical mandates required by the North Carolina General Assembly, as well as federal policies administered by the US Department of Education. In order to extrapolate broadly from the findings, the NCDPI will establish sampling parameters and gather feedback from the North Carolina Technical Advisors regarding the demographic features.

As part of the proof of concept, the NCDPI will determine whether the through-course model is technically sound, operationally feasible, cost effective, and responsive to state and federal reporting requirements. Schools participating in the study will also administer modified EOG assessments. During 2015-16, the NCDPI will conduct a comparability study to determine whether commercial assessments are technically designed with the alignment, reliability, and validity to prepare students for rigorous EOG tests. The study will require the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to request school systems to submit historical interim assessment data generated from the commercially developed assessments to determine alignment integrity.

Based on the outcomes of the through-course study and the local assessment comparability review, the NCDPI will conduct a field test in grades 3-8 of state-developed ELA/Reading and mathematics items, or consider a commercially developed assessment system. In 2017-18, the NCDPI will administer a new assessment. This three-year plan (2015-2018) must have the approval of the State Board of Education.

Operating concurrently with the grades 3-8 plan, the high school proposal for grades 9-11 will build on a pre and post tests to determine the extent to which students are demonstrating proficiency and growth in rigorous state-adopted content standards. These assessments must satisfy a number of state and federal policies around accountability and student accommodations.

PART III. THE ORGANIZATION AND WORK OF THE TASK FORCE

Summary of Task Force Activities

Working in both large and small groups, the Task Force convened monthly from October 2014 through May 2015. General meetings were held in the Education Building; however, webinar sessions and telephone conferencing made it possible to collaborate and plan in small groups, or to participate remotely. The NCDPI Communications Division disseminated information to the public about the activities of the Task Force, and the Office of the State Board routinely posted meeting material on the eBoard website at <http://stateboard.ncpublicschools.org> under SBE meetings. Audio streaming made it possible for the public to listen to live proceedings of Task Force meetings.

To gain a better understanding of how assessment best enhances the process of teaching and learning, the Task Force members formed three groups representing elementary, middle, and high school grades. Chairman Collins directed the groups to study assessments currently administered in each grade and to identify ways to improve the feedback loop from which teachers determine the ways to modify their instructional practices. Each group proposed a model that 1) complements the developmental needs of students, 2) provides timely feedback to teachers, and 3) yields a student growth measure.

In addition committee reports, NCDPI staff and several external stakeholders offered helpful guidance and perspectives. Below is a summary of presentations to the Task Force..

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

- provided a historical perspective on the Standards and Accountability Commission and the Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability
- reviewed revisions to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the proposed Every Child Achieves Act of 2015
- explained the purpose of state assessments currently administered to meet state and federal mandates
- discussed local interim/benchmark assessments
- differentiated between various assessments and the information/data resulting from each one (e.g., formative, interim, and summative)

Educational Associations

The following associations presented perspectives on short-term and long-term changes in the state assessment system.

- North Carolina School Superintendents' Association
- North Carolina School Boards Association

- ☛ North Carolina Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- ☛ North Carolina Association of Educators
- ☛ North Carolina Parent Teacher Association
- ☛ BEST NC
- ☛ North Carolina Chamber Foundation

The associations expressed agreement on the following principles:

- ☛ Educators must ensure that assessments are developmentally appropriate.
- ☛ Assessments must reflect state-adopted content standards; improve student learning; and produce data consistent with state and federal reporting requirements.
- ☛ Assessments must provide timely, valid, and useful information.

Other Presentations

The Task Force received information from regional and school district-level testing coordinators who emphasized the importance of thoroughly covering the content standards before conducting interim assessments, accommodating students with special learning needs, and managing and coordinating the administration of interim/through-course assessments.

Dr. Paul Leather, Deputy Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Education discussed the PACE, an innovative accountability strategy that offers a reduced level of standardized testing used together with locally-developed common performance assessments. These assessments are designed to support “deeper” learning through competency education and to be integrated into students’ day-to-day learning activities. Meaningful assessment is an essential step in ensuring that all students are getting the most out of their education. New Hampshire implemented the PACE model in 2012.

Perspectives and Findings

Based on several written reports and expert presentations, the Task Force offers the following findings:

1. While North Carolina has customarily relied on summative assessments to meet state and federal requirements, the Task Force encourages the NCDPI to design and implement a balanced assessment system—one that builds on tiers of data generated by formative and interim assessments. A through-course design will serve the purpose of guiding teachers’ instructional practice and diagnosing student learning needs “along the way.” Summative (e.g., EOG/EOC) tests appropriately fulfill state and federal reporting mandates.
2. During the school year, classroom teachers are responsible for administering a variety of assessments that have different mandate provisions (e.g., state and/or federal). Below is a sample.

- Test results are used for school performance grades, which include proficiency and growth (state)
- Test results are used to report Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). (federal)
- Tests must be aligned to state-adopted content standards. (federal and state).
- Content standards must satisfy college- and- career ready rigor. (federal and state)
- Students must be assessed on their grade levels. (federal and state)
- Tests must result in an end-of-year achievement level (1-5 in North Carolina). (federal and state)
- As required in policies governing Educator Effectiveness, tests must provide teacher-level growth information. (federal and state)
- Test data must result in national comparisons. (state)
- The North Carolina student assessment system adopted by the State Board of Education applies to all students. School systems are not permitted to administer other summative/end-of-year assessment programs. (federal and state)
- Students with the most significant disabilities must have appropriate assessments aligned to extended content standards. (federal)
- All students must be included in the annual testing program. The testing program must accommodate the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 plans, and English as a Second Language (ESL) documentation.

3. Surveys administered and analyzed by the NCDPI (2014) reveal that school district (on average) dedicate about 2.3 percent of the school year assessing students, regardless of the grade level. The majority of locally mandated assessments are administered in grades 3-8, with at least three assessments given per year in grades 5 through 8. Fifty-five percent of the respondents stated that they use local assessments to inform instruction, while nearly forty percent stated that their school districts administer these tests to monitor student progress in standards-driven curricula and to prepare students for EOG/EOC testing

4. An assessment must fit its purpose. Since the 1990s, standardized assessments have been foundational to school, district, and state accountability policies. In the intervening years, state and federal laws have expanded the use of test data for a variety of reasons (e.g., school performance grades, educator effectiveness, and annual measurable objectives (AMO)). It must be noted that summative tests are not intended to provide student-level, diagnostic data. Instead, they satisfy state and federal reporting requirements calling for cumulative “snapshots” of student achievement. Furthermore, the release time

of official results makes it impossible to provide feedback to teachers. For all intents and purposes, the year of instruction has ended before the Department of Public Instruction is authorized to release official outcomes to school districts.

During March 2015, the NCDPI staff assigned to the Task Force attended a meeting of the North Carolina Technical Advisors to discuss through-course assessments, the proposed high school assessment model, and the proof of concept framework. Although the advisors did not oppose the through-course concept, they raised concerns about its technical soundness and the importance of careful planning, communication, and implementation.

Given the body of information provided in written reports and by knowledgeable stakeholders, the Task Force continued . . .

- deliberating on ways to implement through-course assessment tools with the capacity to provide proficiency and growth data in grades 3-8 and using a high school pre/post-test model in grades 9 and 10 and a national assessment to measure college-and-career readiness in grades 11 and 12;
- collaborating in small groups on ways to enhance student achievement using assessment tools;
- gathering information from other states about interim assessment design;
- exploring a second phase of the study to include kindergarten through grade 3;
- briefing local school superintendents on the assessment proposal and the NCDPI's draft Request for Information (RFI) during the Superintendents' Quarterly Meeting on March 18, 2015. The purpose of a RFI is to determine the availability and costs of through-course assessments. The North Carolina School Superintendents' Association held a meeting on March 27, 2015, for local superintendents and staff to share information on the proposed pilot concept tentatively scheduled to begin during 2015–16.
- collecting information from school districts regarding pilot design preferences (see below).

Option A: The school system will administer commercially developed assessments to generate three or four assessments during 2015–16, or the initial year of the pilot.

Option B: The school system will administer up to four state-developed interim assessments during 2015-16.

Option C: The school system will administer a single assessment suite identified by the state's RFI process that would be administered throughout the 2015–16 piloting school year.

In a review of LEA proposals submitted by 23 systems, 14 districts indicated a preference for state-developed assessments. In the other proposals, school systems mentioned various ways of utilizing state-developed assessments.

Conclusion

The Task Force believes that an interim assessment model designed as a through-course approach is worthy of further exploration and proposes a study of this concept in grades 5 and 6 during 2015-16. Regarding the high school proposal for grades 9-11, the Task Force supports adopting a nationally normed suite of pre-tests and post-tests for determining baseline performance during the freshman and sophomore years and evaluating proficiency and growth during students' junior year. Equally important, this assessment suite must assess the rigor expected in college-and- career ready standards. In summary, the Task Force encourages the SBE to consider the recommendations contained n this report.

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Appendices

Appendices

The following information provided background for the recommendations found in the report from the Task Force on Summative Assessment.

Appendix A - North Carolina Session Law 2014-78 (Senate Bill 812)

Section 5 directs the North Carolina State Board of Education to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2015, on the acquisition and implementation of a new assessment instrument or instruments to assess student achievement.

Appendix B – Initial Draft Task Force Assessment Proposal (December 2014)

This document represents the initial draft assessment proposal.

Appendix C – Updated Draft Task Force Assessment Proposal (March 2015)

The updated draft provides a few refined details on the assessment proposal from discussions that occurred between December 2014 and March 2015.

Appendix D – Summary of Submitted Requests for Information (RFI)

The summary includes information from commercial vendors via a request for information (RFI) process for grades 3-8 interim and high school assessments.

Appendix E – School District Superintendent Assessment Planning Meeting Notes

A meeting was held on March 27, 2015, to discuss ideas for the piloting of new assessments. The meeting notes provide detail of the discussion, outlining three proposed assessment pilot design options for grades 3-8 that were expressed by the 23 local school districts representatives who attended the meeting. During this meeting it was determined that the state could also review vendor-developed interim assessment data provided by local school districts to determine the alignment of these tests to the academic content standards.

Appendix F – Summary of Assessment and Piloting Plan: Grades 3-8

From the 23 local school districts represented at the March 27 meeting, 15 responded with assessment piloting plans for grades 3-8. This document provides a summary of the responses received from the local school districts.

Appendix G - Responses from the Business Community and School District Superintendents

Various education stakeholder groups presented during Task Force meetings held in both November 2014 and February 2015, including business community groups and local school district superintendents. Information in Appendix G provides additional responses from these perspectives.

Appendix H – NCDPI Proof of Concept Study for Grades 3-8

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction drafted information on a proof of concept study for a through-course assessment design for grades 3-8. This information was presented to the State Board of Education during its June 2015 meeting.

Appendix A –North Carolina Session Law 2014-78 (Senate Bill 812)

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013**

**SESSION LAW 2014-78
SENATE BILL 812**

AN ACT TO EXERCISE NORTH CAROLINA'S CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY OVER ALL ACADEMIC STANDARDS; TO REPLACE COMMON CORE; AND TO ENSURE THAT STANDARDS ARE ROBUST AND APPROPRIATE AND ENABLE STUDENTS TO SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY.

Whereas, the North Carolina Constitution, Article IX, Section 5, directs the State Board of Education to supervise and administer a free public school system and make all needed rules and regulations in relation thereto, subject to laws enacted by the General Assembly; and

Whereas, the North Carolina General Statutes direct the State Board of Education to adopt and modify academic standards for the public schools; and

Whereas, the North Carolina General Statutes also grant local boards of education broad discretion and authority with respect to specific curricular decisions and academic programs, as long as they align with the standards adopted by the State Board of Education; and

Whereas, North Carolina desires its academic standards to be among the highest in the nation; and

Whereas, the adoption and implementation of demanding, robust academic standards is essential for providing high-quality education to our students and for fostering a competitive economy for the future of our State; and

Whereas, North Carolina's standards must be age-level and developmentally appropriate; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The State Board of Education shall:

- (1) Continue to exercise its authority under the North Carolina Constitution and G.S. 115C-12(9c) to adopt academic standards for the public schools.
- (2) Conduct a comprehensive review of all English Language Arts and Mathematics standards adopted under G.S. 115C-12(9c) and propose modifications to ensure that those standards meet all of the following criteria:
 - a. Increase students' level of academic achievement.
 - b. Meet and reflect North Carolina's priorities.
 - c. Are age-level and developmentally appropriate.
 - d. Are understandable to parents and teachers.
 - e. Are among the highest standards in the nation.
- (3) Not enter into any agreement, understanding, or contract that would cede control of the Standard Course of Study and related assessments. This requirement does not prohibit the use of national or international curricula, such as the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs.
- (4) Involve and survey a representative sample of parents, teachers, and the public to help determine academic content standards that meet and reflect North Carolina's priorities and the usefulness of the content standards.
- (5) Prior to making changes to the standards, consult with the Academic Standards Review Commission, which is established in Section 2 of this act.

SECTION 1.(b) Academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education under G.S. 115C-12(9c) shall continue to be named and referred to as the "North Carolina

Standard Course of Study," reflecting emphasis on North Carolina's needs and priorities. The State Board of Education shall maintain and reinforce the independence of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and related student assessments, rejecting usurpation and intrusion from federally mandated national or standardized controls.

SECTION 2.(a) There is established the Academic Standards Review Commission. The Commission shall be located administratively in the Department of Administration but shall exercise all its prescribed powers independently of the Department of Administration.

SECTION 2.(b) The Commission shall be composed of 11 members as follows:

- (1) Four members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The President Pro Tempore shall consider, but is not limited to, appointing representatives from the following groups in these appointments: parents of students enrolled in the public schools; Mathematics and English Language Arts teachers; Mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum experts; school leadership to include principals and superintendents; members of the business community; and members of the postsecondary education community who are qualified to assure the alignment of standards to career and college readiness.
- (2) Four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall consider, but is not limited to, appointing representatives from the following groups in these appointments: parents of students enrolled in the public schools; Mathematics and English Language Arts teachers; Mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum experts; school leadership to include principals and superintendents; members of the business community; and members of the postsecondary education community who are qualified to assure the alignment of standards to career and college readiness.
- (3) Two members of the State Board of Education as follows: (i) the Chair or the Chair's designee and (ii) a member appointed by the Chair, representing the State Board's Task Force on Summative Assessment.
- (4) One member appointed by the Governor.

No individual serving in a statewide elected office or as a member of the General Assembly shall be appointed to the Commission. The Commission shall meet on the call of the Chair of the State Board of Education no later than September 1, 2014. The cochairs of the Commission shall be elected during the first meeting from among the members of the Commission by the members of the Commission.

SECTION 2.(c) The Commission shall:

- (1) Conduct a comprehensive review of all English Language Arts and Mathematics standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education under G.S. 115C-12(9c) and propose modifications to ensure that those standards meet all of the following criteria:
 - a. Increase students' level of academic achievement.
 - b. Meet and reflect North Carolina's priorities.
 - c. Are age-level and developmentally appropriate.
 - d. Are understandable to parents and teachers.
 - e. Are among the highest standards in the nation.
- (2) As soon as practicable upon convening, and at any time prior to termination, recommend changes and modifications to these academic standards to the State Board of Education.
- (3) Recommend to the State Board of Education assessments aligned to proposed changes and modifications that would also reduce the number of high-stakes assessments administered to public schools.
- (4) Consider the impact on educators, including the need for professional development, when making any of the recommendations required in this section.

The Commission shall assemble content experts to assist it in evaluating the rigor of academic standards. The Commission shall also involve interested stakeholders in this process and otherwise ensure that the process is transparent.

SECTION 2.(d) The Commission shall meet upon the call of the cochairs. A quorum of the Commission shall be nine members. Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the appointing authority. The Commission shall hold its first meeting no later than September 1, 2014.

SECTION 2.(e) To the extent that funds are available, the Commission may contract for professional, clerical, and consultant services. Professional and clerical staff positions for the Commission may be filled by persons whose services are loaned to the Commission to fulfill the work of the Commission.

SECTION 2.(f) The Department of Administration shall provide meeting rooms, telephones, office space, equipment, and supplies to the Commission and shall be reimbursed from the Commission's budget, to the extent that funds are available.

SECTION 2.(g) To the extent that funds are available, the Commission members shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances in accordance with G.S. 138-5, 138-6, or 120-3.1, as appropriate.

SECTION 2.(h) Upon the request of the Commission, all State departments and agencies and local governments and their subdivisions shall furnish the Commission with any information in their possession or available to them.

SECTION 2.(i) The Commission shall make a final report of its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, and the 2016 Session of the 2015 General Assembly. The Commission shall terminate on December 31, 2015, or upon the filing of its final report, whichever occurs first.

SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(3) is repealed.

SECTION 3.(b) The State Board of Education shall continue to develop and update the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in accordance with G.S. 115C-12(9c), including a review of standards in other states and of national assessments aligned with those standards, and shall implement the assessments the State Board deems most aligned to assess student achievement on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, in accordance with Section 9.2(b) of S.L. 2013-360 and Section 5 of this act.

SECTION 4. G.S. 115C-12(39) reads as rewritten:

"(39) Power to Accredit Schools. – Upon the request of a local board of education, the State Board of Education shall evaluate schools in local school administrative units to determine whether the education provided by those schools meets acceptable levels of quality. The State Board shall adopt rigorous and appropriate academic standards for accreditation after consideration of (i) the standards of regional and national accrediting agencies, (ii) ~~the Common Core Standards adopted by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers,~~ the academic standards adopted in accordance with subdivision (9c) of this section, and (iii) other information it deems appropriate.

The local school administrative unit shall compensate the State Board for the actual costs of the accreditation process."

SECTION 5. The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2015, on the acquisition and implementation of a new assessment instrument or instruments to assess student achievement on the academic standards adopted pursuant to G.S. 115C-12(9c). The State Board shall not acquire or implement the assessment instrument or instruments without the enactment of legislation by the General Assembly authorizing the purchase. The assessment instrument or instruments shall be nationally normed, aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and field-tested. Examples of appropriate assessment models would include, but not be limited to, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), ACT Aspire, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

SECTION 6. Local boards of education shall continue to provide for the efficient teaching of the course content required by the Standard Course of Study as provided under G.S. 115C-47(12). The current Standard Course of Study remains in effect until official notice is provided to all public school teachers, administrators, and parents or guardians of students enrolled in the public schools of any changes made in the Standard Course of Study by the State Board of Education.

SECTION 7. This act becomes effective July 1, 2014.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 16th day of July, 2014.

s/ Philip E. Berger
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Thom Tillis
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Pat McCrory
Governor

Approved 12:07 p.m. this 22nd day of July, 2014

Appendix B – Initial Draft Task Force Assessment Proposal (December 2014)

Testing and Accountability Proposal Model

Guiding Principles

1. Given current technology, it is increasingly easier to include assessments as an integral part of the instructional process rather than waiting to the end of the year to do statewide testing.
2. Interim-type assessments have the potential to influence instructional and learning practices as compared to summative assessments.
3. State law requires the State Board of Education to “implement national assessments the Board deems to be aligned with standards to assess student achievement.”
4. During the past 15 years, more and more school districts have added scheduled, interim assessments, thus increasing the number of tests students take.
5. By definition, summative tests are snapshots, with a minimum number of questions to support reliability and validity. Using them as diagnostic assessments is inappropriate.
6. Any assessment should be aligned to standards; otherwise, they are unfair to students, teachers, and schools.
7. Any assessment system should allow feedback that improves instruction.

Proposal

Grades 3-8 Testing	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four interim assessments administered online throughout the year for Math, English Language Arts/Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on student mastery of content divided into four modules ○ Grade level proficiency demonstrated by meeting the proficiency standards on the four modules ○ Growth analysis determined by using module assessment data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates end-of-grade tests • Empowers teachers/schools to administer tests at different times • Reduces number of assessments LEAs require • Gives immediate feedback to determine learning gaps • Allows more authentic problem based assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summative test administered for one grade each year. For example, 5th grade in year 1, 4th grade in year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces number of tests • Provides snapshot for public reporting

Grades 9-12* Testing**	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-assessment in grade 9, for example, Explore (ACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Results used to determine student growth ● Diagnostic assessment, Plan (ACT), in grade 10 ● ACT (or similar national assessment aligned to standards) to determine college readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gives comparisons of North Carolina to other states ● Meets state law requirements for a national assessment ● Used as a factor to determine admission to colleges and universities ● Provides diagnostic information to empower instructional and learning practices ● Involves all teachers to ensure readiness for the next step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WorkKeys to determine career readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meets requirements for career ready ● Recognized in business/industry as an indicator of being career ready

*Note: other accountability measures should include

- Math rigor (4th level math, GPA 2.6 enables students to enter community colleges)
- Graduation rate
- Percent of students passing Advanced Placement courses, community college courses, university courses by the end of the 12th grade

**All students would take final exams, either those provided by the Department of Public Instruction or by local school district. These exams would be taken during the exam time scheduled for each high school, but the results would not be a part of the accountability system.

Appendix C – Updated Draft Task Force Assessment Proposal (March 2015)

Task Force on Summative Assessment Assessment Proposal

Draft Framework

Model for Assessment at Grades 3 through 8

While North Carolina has customarily relied heavily upon the use of summative assessments in an effort to meet state and federal requirements, it has given consideration to a more balanced assessment system that includes the use of formative and interim assessments. The purpose of summative assessment is to provide a snapshot of students' cumulative progress at the end of the school year, and this ensues in the delivery of results after instruction has ended for the school year. Educators prefer to use test results to adjust instruction. With results provided throughout the school year, an assessment system with periodic assessments serves the purpose of guiding teacher instructional practices and promoting student learning along the way.

The model for periodic assessment is being set forth as school districts implement an increasing number of interim assessments. Periodic assessments that would provide for national comparisons of student performance would replace the interim/benchmark assessments currently administered locally, which do not meet all state and federal requirements. The North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests would also be eliminated. A combination of three or four periodic assessments could provide diagnostic information and yield student proficiency and growth data. A periodic assessment model could also alleviate the costs and time associated with administering various assessments at the local level.

Model for Assessment at Grades 9 through 12

The high school model differs from the periodic assessment model for earlier grade levels. At high school the administration of the North Carolina End-of-Course Tests would be eliminated. Replacing those tests would be a pre-test/post-test model with grade level assessments administered at grades 9, 10, and 11. Current state law cites the ACT suite, which allows for national comparisons of student achievement, as well as providing an indicator of college and career readiness and school accountability. It would be necessary to change the current law if another assessment suite is recommended for adoption and if the state chooses to determine proficiency based upon academic standards. The State Board of Education will determine what national assessment will be used beginning with the 2016-17 school year.

A national assessment suite for English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, and Science would be administered in grades 9 and 10, serving as the pre-tests for the assessment administered in grade 11. The grade 11 assessment would be the post-test and would be used for measuring proficiency toward North Carolina academic content standards. The combination of the grades 9, 10, and 11 assessments would also be used to meet current school and federal accountability requirements. The assessments would also be used as part of educator effectiveness. A separate national college and career readiness assessment would provide information for students who are Career and Technical Education completers.

The NC Final Exams would become an optional tool to be used for instructional purposes and not part of the educator evaluation system.

Appendix D – Summary of Submitted Requests for Information (RFI)

Grades 3-8 Interim Assessments and High School Assessments

Request for Information: Interim Assessment System for Grades 3-8

North Carolina is proposing a new through-course assessment model to inform and to improve instructional practices. The proposed assessment framework will be designed to maintain high standards and to provide a national comparison of student performance. This model involves the design and the administration of quarterly assessments throughout the school year in grades 3–8 for English language arts/reading and mathematics. The purposes of this assessment framework are:

- To provide formative feedback to teachers on student performance by content standards throughout the school year
- To provide students growth information both for school accountability and for the educator evaluation instrument’s Standard 6 (for teachers) and Standard 8 (for principals)
- To report school performance grades
- To fulfill ESEA accountability requirements
- To provide data for state and national comparison

To facilitate the evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed assessment system, the NCDPI is requesting potential vendors respond to this Request for Information by providing the following information on current interim/benchmark assessments offered by the vendor. The reference to a quarterly structure is not limiting; vendors may propose a system with four, three, or two assessments administered throughout the school year; however, vendors must explain in detail how their interim/benchmark assessments meet each of the following requirements. Vendors may elect to propose a system and specify how the requirements would be fulfilled. For each of the solutions, either current assessments or proposed, the cost per student must be provided.

Four vendors responded to the grades 3-8 request for information:

- CTB/McGraw-Hill submitted Acuity College and Career Readiness Assessments and Acuity Diagnostic Assessments
- Riverside (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) submitted Continuum Adaptive Benchmark Assessments
- NWEA submitted Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
- Renaissance Learning submitted STAR Reading and STAR Math

Vendor	NWEA	STAR	Riverside	CTB/McGraw Hill
Assessment Name	Measures of Student Learning (MAP)	STAR	Continuum Adaptive Benchmark Assessment	Acuity-Diagnostic and Acuity ACCR

Basic Cost to Administer	\$19 per student (excluding training)	YEAR 1: \$9500 per district + \$4995 per school + \$3.80 per reading student + \$3.80 per math student. YEAR 2+: \$4500 per district + \$599 per school + \$3.80 per reading student + \$3.80 per math student	Per year: ELA- \$5.00, Math \$5.00, ELA & Math \$8.00, Summative Assessment \$25	\$18.75 (bundled) per student (Diagnostic and ACCR Math & ELA)
Aligned to the NC Content Standards	NC Standards	NC Standard Course of Study	Aligned to the Common Core State Standards	College and Career Readiness
Administration Modes(s) (online or paper or both) ¹	Online and paper assessments available. Online is adaptive.	Online administrations only (adaptive)	Online administrations only (adaptive)	Online and paper assessments available
Achievement Levels and Descriptors Provided	Suggests a new standard setting.	Yes; Under "Summary Reports"	Unclear	Mastery level reporting
Grade Level Proficiency Attainment Indicator Provided	Yes; Part of "component 3"	Yes; Under "Student Progress Monitoring Report" and "Annual Progress Reports"	"Various tiers of grade indicators"	Unclear
Alternate Assessment Provided	Yes; Braille not available	No	No, Braille not available, read aloud requires separate setting	No

¹Online only administrations would require statewide infrastructure for grades 3-8.

Request for Information: High School Assessment Framework

North Carolina is proposing a new assessment model to replace the current end-of-course assessments in Math I, English II, and Biology. The proposed assessment framework will be designed to maintain high standards and to provide a national comparison of student performance. This framework involves the design and administration of grade level assessments of reading, mathematics, science, and writing administered at grades 9, 10, and 11, which support data for growth and for predictive information so instructional programs may be altered to ensure students are college and career ready at the completion of high school. The purposes of this assessment framework are:

- To provide formative feedback to teachers on student performance and progress toward college and career readiness at grades 9, 10, and 11
- To provide students growth information both for school accountability and for the educator evaluation instrument's Standard 6 (for teachers) and Standard 8 (for principals)
- To report school performance grades

- To fulfill ESEA accountability requirements
- To provide data for state and national comparison

To facilitate the evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed framework, the NCDPI is requesting potential vendors respond to this Request for Information by providing the following information on current assessments offered by the vendor. Vendors must explain in detail how their assessments meet each of the following requirements. Vendors may elect to propose a system and specify how the requirements would be fulfilled. For each of the solutions, either current assessments or proposed, the cost per student must be provided.

Three vendors responded to the high school request for information:

- ACT submitted The ACT
- Riverside (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) submitted Continuum Adaptive Benchmark Assessments
- College Board submitted the SAT suite of assessments

Vendor	ACT	Riverside	College Board
Assessment Name	ACT Aspire (Information about the The ACT is not included. Students in grade 11 would be required to take The ACT.)	Continuum Adaptive Benchmark Assessment	SAT Suite of Assessments (PSAT Gr 8/9, PSAT Gr10, PSAT/NMSQT Gr11, SAT Gr 11/12)
Basic Cost to Administer	\$35.50 per student per test (additional cost required for adding a Writing section), Aspire Early High School \$14.70/student, Aspire Paper Surcharge \$7/student.	ELA: \$5/student, Math: \$5/student, ELA&MATH: \$8, Continuum Summative Assessment: \$25 additional per student	PSAT 8/9: \$8/student; PSAT: \$12/student; SAT: \$43.60.student w/Essay & \$34.40.student w/o Essay
Aligned to the NC Content Standards	Aligned to the Common Core State Standards	Aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)	College and career readiness
Administration Modes(s) (online or paper or both)¹	Online and paper assessments available	Online administrations only (adaptive)	Online and paper assessments available for all
Achievement Levels and Descriptors Provided	Not enough information provided. It is assumed a new standard setting would be necessary.	A new standard setting is proposed	Content-referenced interpretations that will describe the knowledge and skills represented by a student's performance relative to the content/skills covered. Benchmarks will

			be determined based on a probability of achieving a defined outcome.
Grade Level Proficiency Attainment Indicator Provided	Not enough information provided. It is assumed a new standard setting would be necessary.	Student performance summary available.	Yes with PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10
Alternate Assessment Provided	No	No	No, but can work with vendor to meet the needs.

¹Online only administrations would require statewide infrastructure for high schools.

Appendix E – School District Superintendent Assessment Planning Meeting Notes

School District Superintendent Assessment and Pilot Study Planning Meeting

State Board Room
301 North Wilmington Street, Raleigh, North Carolina

Friday, March 27, 2015
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Local School District Representation

Local superintendents and/or staff represented the following school districts during the meeting:

Bladen, Beaufort, Cabarrus, Columbus, Cumberland, Davidson, Davie, Elkin, Gates, Harnett, Hertford, Hickory City, Johnston, Kannapolis City, Mooresville, Mt. Airy, Nash-Rocky Mount, New Hanover, Newton-Conover City, Richmond, Surry, and Wake

Meeting Facilitation

The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Buddy Collins, Vice Chair, State Board of Education and Chair of the State Board of Education Task Force on Summative Assessment with the assistance of Mr. Jack Hoke, Executive Director, NC School Superintendent Association.

Guest Speaker

Dr. John White, Director, Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) with SAS Institute was invited to speak regarding the impact of the assessment proposal and pilot study on the calculations of teacher value-added measures through EVAAS.

Staff Participation

The following State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction staff members were in attendance:

Mr. Martez Hill, Executive Director, State Board of Education; Dr. Audrey Martin-McCoy, Policy Analyst, State Board of Education; Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Data, Research and Federal Policy, NCDPI; Dr. Tammy Howard, Director, Accountability Services, NCDPI; and Ms. Hope Lung, Section Chief, Test Development, Accountability Services, NCDPI

Meeting Summary

Copies of the draft *Testing and Accountability Proposal Model* (dated December 16, 2014) and its narrative framework (dated March 13, 2015) were distributed.

After a welcome and introductions by Mr. Collins the floor was open to Dr. Darrin Hartness, Superintendent, Davie County Schools and Dr. Lory Morrow, Superintendent, Davidson County Schools. The superintendents discussed their collaboration in the the use of the state item bank, SchoolNet and the importance of school districts being able to compare student performance across districts. They expressed interest in school systems utilizing the interim assessment systems that they already have in place to measure student growth. Both superintendents stated that their districts would not be willing to participate in a pilot of the proposed assessment system if the end-of-grade tests and NC Final Exams were administered during the pilot, expressing that it would be too burdensome for the district's students and staff.

The need for diagnostic assessments is important for teachers, students, parents, according to Dr. Mark Edwards, Superintendent, Mooresville Grades School District, and President, NC School Superintendent Association. Use of a system that included dividing the end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments across the year into four short (twenty five item) assessments would be most favorable. At issue is a possible security protocol, such as proctors, with these diagnostic assessments that he believed may be unnecessary. While the Superintendent expressed understanding the need for testing security, a standardized administration, and the need for accountability, school systems should be encouraged to be creative and innovative in their approaches to data collection and analysis of student achievement.

Dr. Frank Till, Cumberland County Schools Superintendent, was called upon as a member the Task Force on Summative Assessment. He remarked that "the current testing system is broken" and does not provide information in a timely manner for teachers to make decisions about student learning. He stated that state legislators are willing to examine testing related to teacher effectiveness (as related to the NC Final Exams and Standard 6 in the teacher evaluation system). He stated that school districts cannot have a pilot that requires them to assess students through a new system and old system of tests as it will take too much time away from instruction.

Dr. Robert Taylor, Bladen County Schools Superintendent, also recognized as a member of the Task Force, stated that the committee believes that time cannot be wasted in moving to a new system. He reassured the superintendents that the Task Force has asked and discussed the same questions as those presented by the field regarding the assessment proposal and pilot. Dr. Taylor specified that a new assessment system and piloting districts must still meet state and federal requirements from the US Department of Education and the NC General Assembly. He encouraged the local superintendents to have a collective voice and acknowledged that sacrifices may need to be made in this effort. He highlighted that while much work has been invested by some districts to tailor interim assessments to fit their specific needs, if the same standards and same pacing guides are used it makes sense to use common assessments.

Dr. Taylor stated that there may be different options (models) for what the design of the pilot. One option is all school districts to use the same interim assessment and participate in the same pilot. This model would generate consistent data across the state for decision-making.

Questions were posed as to how many of the standards would be covered with each of the three or four interim assessments covered throughout the year, and whether the assessments will measure multiple academic content standards each time administered. Dr. Tammy Howard was called upon to address these questions.

Dr. Howard summarized part of the conversation that was held with the NC Technical Advisors Committee (NCTAC) on March 26, 2015, and that there may be different ways to approach the pilot. It may be possible to examine school year 2013-14 interim assessment data from schools systems to see if there is alignment between vendor interim assessments and end-of-grade tests in terms of test items and student results. This information will also assist policy makers in making decisions about what vendor-made assessments are most closely aligned to state academic standards, and therefore the end-of-grade summative assessments.

The NCTAC stated that it was risky to suspend the use of the administration of the end-of-grade, end-of-course tests, and NC Final Exams during the pilot because there would be no standard of comparison for student performance between the new assessments and the current summative assessments. Mr. Collins followed with a comment that the Department would want to ensure the models are comparable.

Dr. Howard indicated that the use of a through-course assessment model, one that uses periodic assessments (such as interims) throughout the year for diagnostic information to yield summative results is promising, but does present challenges. The development of this model must be done thoughtfully, carefully, and will take time to implement. Important considerations must be outlined for the pilot:

- Data collected must be representative of the entire state;
- Assessments used must be aligned to the academic content standards (not all vendor-made assessment products are aligned to the academic content standards); and
- There must be evidence that the assessment measures academic content standards and that these measurements are reliable and consistent.

Ms. Hope Lung stated to the group that they should consider defining the purpose of the assessment and asked that they think of what data local school districts want reported at the end of the school year. She suggested that it would be most effective to identify what types of data are desirable and build from that point. Formative and interim assessment data are used to provide student feedback and informs instruction and teacher practice. Summative assessment data are most preferably used for the purpose of program evaluation and improvement. Therefore, assessment design matters.

Ms. Lung reiterated that the technical advisors suggest that the purpose of the assessment must be defined, assessments must be designed to fit that purpose, and the results are used accordingly.

It was also shared that there are challenges associated when interim assessments are used to generate data for state and federal reporting (NC School Performance Grades and student proficiency and growth):

- Student mobility (within and from outside the state) must be considered when different interim assessments are used among school districts;
- If different assessment vendors are used during the pilot there must be some basic criterion set between each of the districts to establish uniformity of what specific academic standards are being measured and *how* these standards are measured. In other words, large amounts of variability does not allow for accurate comparisons of student test data; and
- In using interim assessments in a through-course approach as described, the technical advisors recommended that external evaluators review the student data collected from any interim assessment administered during the 2015-16 pilot study, make necessary adjustments in school year 2016-17, and if technically sound, implement the new approach during the 2017-18.

Mr. Collins asked the local superintendents and staff to think about these challenges and the need for assessment consistency across the state to generate results that are usable for diagnostic (teaching and learning) and reporting (state and federal) purposes. Dr. Mark Edwards responded that local superintendents, principals, curriculum designers, and teachers can serve as advisors along with test developers to ensure that there is alignment between the academic standards and assessments.

The point was made that specific feedback about student-level learning goal information is important and perhaps assessments generated through the state's item bank could be utilized.

Dr. Howard addressed a question about access to the state's item bank, stressing a point made in the conversation regarding that not all school districts contract with a vendor for interim assessments, nor can they financially afford to next school year. The current test item bank that is provided by the state to the school districts allows teachers and staff to create their own classroom and interim assessments that can be seen across the school district. When there are different tests created with differing items generated by teachers or school staff there is little consistency to enable comparisons to be made on student performance.

It was explained that the state has the capacity to build interim assessments for all school districts where data can be generated to compare student performance across the state. These could be diagnostic tests that are reviewed by the state for technical appropriateness. These would not be high stakes tests and therefore not have the same security protocol and protections attached to them (such as proctors, removing prohibited items, covering classroom displays, etc.).

While there was a desire to decrease the amount of testing, the local superintendents appeared to agree that testing that informs instruction is fundamental. Data from the current summative assessments do little, if anything to address the need for diagnostic information throughout the year. A paradigm that will generate diagnostic information which is based on two assessments (one mid-year and another at the end of the school year) or four assessments (one for each of the four quarters of the school year) is most amenable. While it was mentioned by one school district that a "less formal" testing system is preferable,

Mr. Collins reiterated that we must reach a balance between testing to inform instruction and data creation for accountability purposes.

Dr. John White was asked to speak next, outlining that he would spend time speaking to the proposed assessment system in regards to capturing a valid student growth measure through the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS). He pointed out four criteria that are necessary for performing value-added calculations:

1. There should be adequate stretch or spread in test scores at the highest and lowest points of a scale. In other words, all scores should not simply cluster on the highest or lowest ends; there should be adequate score variability along a scale to discern differentiation in student performance.
2. Tests must be reliable.
3. The tests must be correlated with the academic content standards – the test must reflect what was taught.
4. There must be a relationship between one test to the next.

Dr. White stated that SAS has calculated student growth for teacher effectiveness based on various national vendor-made interim assessments, including very large school districts. However, if each school district in the state uses a different interim assessment comparable value-added data cannot be computed. He also said that if interim assessments are teacher-made from an item bank and are not technically uniform and standardized, student growth measures cannot be calculated.

Dr. White affirmed that in terms of the high school assessment model, the current national assessment proposed cannot yield individual teacher value-added measures based on the broad subject areas of reading, mathematics, science, and writing, because student scores cannot be attributed or assigned to a single teacher. Therefore the end-of-course tests and NC Final Exams would still need to be administered to generate individual value-added scores for teachers.

There was a question as to whether the end-of grade tests have been shown to be highly predictive of ACT performance in grade 11 and whether the growth measures of the end-of-grade tests at grade 8 could predict high school performance. Dr. White agreed that a through-course assessment model that includes two or four separate tests could show promise in providing teacher effectiveness data.

Dr. Taylor moved the discussion forward by providing possible options for different pilot designs. Each of the pilot designs would include the use of four interim assessments throughout the school year:

1. A single set of assessments created by state test developers using the state's item bank;
2. Vendor created assessments that are currently purchased and used by the local school districts; or
3. A single assessment suite selected by the state as identified through a Request for Information (RFI) and subsequent procurement process.

The audience of local superintendents and staff responded with comments. One school district stated that sacrifices will have to be made in the ability to compare student performance data across the state if school districts ultimately use differing assessments for the pilot.

Mr. Collins and Dr. White clarified that during the pilot the use of different tests to calculate student growth measures for teacher effectiveness could be used, however, *there must be a single assessment recommended by the conclusion of the pilot.* Dr. Howard added that the technical advisors were clear that the ideal pilot would include the administration of the end-of-grade, end-of-course, and NC Final Exams during the pilot to allow for comparisons between the new and old assessment systems as proof of concept and to fulfill the requirements of current state and federal law.

A request was made on behalf of the smaller school districts for consistency in assessments across the state. This small school district staff member asked that consideration be given to the impact that new academic content standards and assessments have on their limited personnel and financial resources, especially in reference to professional development and the purchase of assessments. A rural school district echoed that consistency is important due to limited resources, and if the academic standards change there will be additional burden placed on school districts if the Academic Standards Commission changes standards.

Another smaller school district asked the group to consider the impact the piloting school districts would have on not administering the end-of-grade, end-of-course, and NC Final Exams. The school districts ask if exemption from these summative tests during the pilot would “dilute” the data set that the state has built throughout the years.

As the meeting began to draw to a close, Mr. Collins began to discuss important take aways and next steps. He stated that the state item bank may be the most affordable option for the creation of interim assessments as no additional funds have been allotted by the General Assembly to purchase interim assessments at the state level that would be utilized by all 115 school districts. Mr. Collins emphasized that there are trade-offs that must be considered and asked that the superintendents and their staff create a plan for how they would implement interim assessments in a pilot using the state item bank or a vendor-made assessments. It was said that details about what should be included in the plan, along with the day’s meeting notes, will be forwarded from the State Board Office to NC Superintendents Association.

At the conclusion of the meeting Ms. Lung took an informal poll of the number and type of interim assessments that the represented school districts currently use as noted below. Note that some school districts indicated that they used a hybrid model of vendor-made assessments and the state’s item bank.

NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress: 1 district
Renaissance Learning –STAR Assessments – 6 districts
Riverside Publishing – ITBS Assessment – 2 districts
Discovery Education Assessment– 3 districts
TE21 - Case Assessments – 1 district
NC state item bank (SchoolNet) – 14 districts

Notes submitted by Dr. Audrey Martin-McCoy,
Office of State Board of Education

Appendix F – Summary of Assessment and Piloting Plans: Grades 3-8

Assessment and Piloting Plan for Grades 3-8 Summary of Submitted Plans

Twenty-three districts attended the *Superintendent Assessment and Pilot Study Planning Meeting* held at the NC Department of Public Instruction on March 27, 2015.

After the meeting attending school systems were provided a set of notes outlining three proposed assessment pilot designs that emerged during the meeting. As a result, participating districts were asked to submit a proposed piloting plan by April 20.

The following directions were provided: Select only one of the following three options below in which your district is willing to participate. Next, provide descriptions as requested on the following page.

1. **OPTION A:** The school system would be willing to use a *commercially developed vendor assessment* to generate up to four assessments administered throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year. School systems would agree to share their student data from these assessments with the state toward the ultimate selection of a single commercial vendor.
2. **OPTION B:** The school system would be willing to use up to four *state-developed interim assessments* administered throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year.
3. **OPTION C:** The school system would be willing to use a *single assessment suite* identified by the state's Request for Information (RFI) process that would be used throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year.

A few school systems created an **OPTION D** which they described as "Other."

A summary of the responses is provided below:

- **15 of 23** districts submitted an assessment and piloting plan.
- **1 of 15** districts marked **Option A:** The school system would be willing to use a *commercially developed vendor assessment* to generate up to four assessments administered throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year. School systems would agree to share their student data from these assessments with the state toward the ultimate selection of a single commercial vendor.
- **9 of 15** districts marked **Option B:** The school system would be willing to use up to four *state-developed interim assessments* administered throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year.

- **1 of 15** districts marked **Option C**: The school system would be willing to use a *single assessment suite* identified by the state’s Request for Information (RFI) process that would be used throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year.
- **4 of 15** districts marked **Option D (Other)**. The school district consortium would be willing to use SchoolNet to generate up to three assessments administered throughout the 2015-17 piloting school years. The school districts in the consortium would select items from SchoolNet to be used in three interim assessments. Interim assessments would be developed by a team of professionals from each district. Within each district, assessments would be common among all grade levels and subject areas.

Additional information is provided in the table in the table below:

District(s)	Option Marked	Comments
Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Harnett, Richmond	B	For grades 3-8, the pilot group would like DPI to develop assessments in Home Base/SchoolNet that will be administered at the end of each quarter. The items used on these assessments will only be accessible to the test makers.
Davidson, Davie, Surry, Mount Airy City	D	The school district consortium would be willing to use SchoolNet to generate up to three assessments administered throughout the 2015-17 piloting school years. The school districts in the consortium would select items from SchoolNet to be used in three interim assessments. Interim assessments would be developed by a team of professionals from each district. Within each district, assessments would be common among all grade levels and subject areas.
Gates	B	For grades 3-8, the pilot group would like DPI to develop assessments in Home Base/SchoolNet that will be administered at the end of each quarter.
Hertford	B	Our LEA has a waiver to opt out of current state testing for areas the pilot will assess. If Option B is inherently low pressure testing with percentages that calculate toward growth for the final assessment (i.e. Instruct, assess, intervene, assess, instruct).
Hickory City	B	Assessments 1 and 3 would be formative assessments. Assessment 2 would be a benchmark assessment. Assessment 4 would be a summative assessment.
New Hanover	Marked Option C. Review of the information provided would categorize this plan as Option B.	Our school system is willing to use a <i>single assessment suite</i> identified by the state’s Request for Information (RFI) process that would be used throughout the 2015-16 piloting school year. The district anticipates that SchoolNet may be a selected system. The district has included funding for SchoolNet in the proposed 2015-2016 local budget proposal.

Johnston	A	Johnston County Schools will administer Curriculum Associates' Computer Adaptive i-Ready® Diagnostic three times per year (beginning- September, middle-December/January, and end-May) to students in grades 3 – 8, allowing for the recommended 12 – 18 weeks of instruction between assessment periods. The test will be administered in the subject areas of Reading and Math.
Mooresville Graded	B	MGSD teachers and administrators will work closely with DPI and other piloting LEAs to establish a prioritized common pacing calendar for all LEAs to follow. This would not only allow for a systematic assessment model, but would also provide consistency for transient students across the state. LEAs would still maintain autonomy in developing their own curriculum aligned to the State's pacing calendar. MGSD would administer the assessments at the end of each 9-week quarter.

Appendix G – Responses from the Business Community and School District Superintendents

May 29, 2015

Dear North Carolina State Board of Education Members,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving testing and accountability in North Carolina schools. We understand the complexity of these issues, and are grateful for your dedication of time and effort to develop comprehensive solutions.

The organizations represented here have reviewed the Task Force on Summative Assessment's draft framework and the various interpretations and modifications that have been made since its release. Collectively, we have concerns about some components of the framework and the speed of implementation. Consequently, we support a scaled-back pilot for 2015-16 to provide more time to consider the proposed changes and to gain experience with the implementation of the proposed interim assessments.

We recommend you require the following in the pilot design:

- 1. As a Board, determine what questions the pilot can and should answer.** This will help all stakeholders better understand the new testing model and inform the Board's approach to implementation.
- 2. Keep it small,** such as by limiting participation to one grade in elementary school and one in middle school to minimize the disruption of learning that occurs during any transition this fundamental.
- 3. Recommend that schools not administer additional local benchmarks to students who participate in the pilot,** to ensure that students do not experience increased testing as a result of the pilot.
- 4. Ensure that the participating population is representative of North Carolina students,** by identifying eligible districts and/or schools using valid statistical sampling.
- 5. Require clarity at the outset regarding the stakes** (for students, teachers, schools, and districts) attached to each interim assessment, to help minimize testing anxiety while ensuring valid data for state accountability purposes.

A small, well-developed and tracked pilot is a good start to creating meaningful improvements to testing in North Carolina. However, the vast majority of students will not benefit from the effects of the pilot and will continue to experience the challenges and shortcomings of North Carolina's current testing system. Therefore, the Board should also consider how the State can better serve the needs of all students related to testing.

We recommend you consider the following options to improve testing overall:

- 1. Undertake a third-party evaluation of the quality of the North Carolina Final Exams** and direct DPI to make the necessary changes to improve reliability, validity and buy-in to those assessments.
- 2. Commit to continuous improvement of all state tests.** One approach to ensuring our state's tests continue to be of the highest quality is to create competition by directing DPI to issue a RFI for a full state assessment system, and requiring DPI to demonstrate how a state-developed assessment system can or does meet the requirements of the RFI.
- 3. Direct DPI to assist districts in the evaluation of locally-developed or purchased benchmarks** to ensure those assessments are high-quality, aligned to standards, and predictive of EOG/EOC scores.

Thank you very much for considering these recommendations. Please contact Katie Hagan at Katie.Hagan@BEST-NC.org if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Testing

Throughout the country, the number of assessments given to students has increased. Some would blame the increase on Common Core; others would blame the need for accountability. Whatever the cause, there has been a criticism of education and the over-assessment of students. The State of North Carolina has experienced the same criticism. This criticism led the General Assembly to charge the State Board of Education to form a Task Force and report back on the progress. Attachment 1 is the composition of the Task Force. The task force has met monthly under the leadership of Board members, Buddy Collins and Olivia Oxendine.

In December, State Superintendent June Atkinson and Task Force members Frank Till, Superintendent of Cumberland County Schools and Robert Taylor, Superintendent of Bladen County Schools met to discuss a proposal to present to the Task Force. The proposal would greatly reduce the number of tests and move assessment to greater improvement of student achievement. The proposal suggests a move to formative assessments which would allow greater adjustment to student needs. It would eliminate summative assessments which have been criticized for their lateness of data and the inability to make adjustments for students.

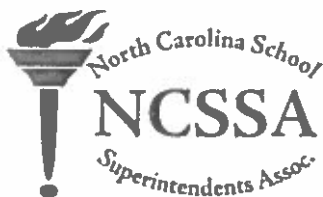
The proposal, Attachment 2, was shared with the Task Force plus several representative groups that included teachers, administrators, parents and students. All groups were supportive. It would move the use of assessments to more supportive of instruction and would actually allow more instruction to improve achievement. The only modification from the original proposal was the inclusion of International Baccalaureate along with Advanced Placement as part of the accountability system. The proposal would allow the elimination of end-of-year tests and final exams. It is our belief that it would also eliminate standard six requirements that are not included in proposed reauthorization of ESEA Title I.

Districts, based on the proposal districts, were asked to submit an indication of interest to pilot the concept. Twenty-three districts expressed interest and fourteen have completed an application developed by DPI and approved by the Task Force. Attachment 3 is a summary of the submitted pilots.

Superintendents recognize that the recommendations from the Task Force are bold. We believe that it meets the charge of the legislature to reduce testing and still maintain accountability. Superintendents are asking for a commitment from the State Board to support the local assessment pilots as proposed. Pilot districts will need a commitment from DPI to develop tests and to actively advocate for change with the Federal Government. Superintendents understand our communities will see this as a proactive move to make assessment more relevant. In short, with cooperation, this proposal and the pilots are doable.

The following are the recommendations we proposed be adopted:

1. The pilot proposals are adopted and the districts be allowed to move to a formative assessment model that meets NC Standard Course of Study.
2. Establish a subcommittee to select the nationally norm test for the fifth and eighth grade.
3. Establish a subcommittee to select the ACT type assessment for high school.
4. DPI is charged with supporting the pilots and requesting any appropriate waivers.



Appendix H – NCDPI Proof of Concept Study for Grades 3–8

Proof of Concept Study

GRADES 3 THROUGH 8

A through-course assessment model consists of three or four assessments administered throughout the school year, which is designed to provide teachers and parents with immediate feedback for guiding subsequent instruction.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is designing a *through-grade* model which includes testing in grades 3 through 8 in English language arts/reading and mathematics. A proof of concept study of the model may be conducted during the 2015–16 school year to address research questions intended to determine the feasibility of proceeding to a field test year in 2016–17 and a pilot operational statewide administration in 2017–18.

The following chart provides the activity and the impacted grade levels for each year of the development of a through-grade model; however, the outcomes of the 2015–16 proof of concept study will be evaluated in summer 2016 to determine whether to proceed to a field test in 2016–17.

Year	Administration	Grade Levels	Purpose
2015–16	Proof of Concept (sample population)	Grade 5: Math Grade 6: Reading	Determine feasibility of concept
2016–17	Field Test (sample population)	Grades 3–8: Math Grades 4–8: Reading	Test items for inclusion in operational test forms
2017–18	Pilot Operational Year (statewide)	Grades 3–8: Math Grades 4–8: Reading	Full Implementation

Following are the goals, research questions, and design of the proof of concept for the through-grade assessment model.

Purposes and Uses of a Through-Grade Assessment Model

The purposes and uses of a through-grade model include providing

- ✓ Valid and reliable measures for evaluating students' based on North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- ✓ Growth data for educator effectiveness reports.
- ✓ Assessments throughout the year that inform and guide instruction and that predict performance on future assessments within the year.

- ✓ A stand-alone summative assessment at the end of the year that may be connected to the interim assessments.

Research Questions for the Proof of Concept Study (2015–16 Administration)

The first step in designing a through-grade assessment model is to conduct a proof of concept administration in 2015–16 that will address the following research questions:

1. Do interim results provide teachers and students with useful information to inform and improve the delivery of instruction?
2. Will interim assessment results provide early indicator of students' performance on the end-of-year test?
3. How best should the structure of the content standards for English language arts/reading and mathematics be adjusted to fit the design of through-grade model?
4. Is it feasible to incorporate constructed-response items or writing prompts on the English language arts/reading interim assessments?
5. Are there significant motivational effects in terms of performance between scores on the interim and scores on the end-of-year for comparable groups of students?
6. What information will be available for student-level and teacher-level reports and how is such information best delivered and presented?
7. Does the professional development provided to teachers in the proof of concept study adequately prepare them to deliver instruction aligned to the interim assessments?
8. Is it feasible to deliver the assessments both online and paper/pencil?
9. Is it valid and reliable to combine results on the interim assessments for proficiency and growth reporting; thereby, eliminating an end-of-year summative assessment?
10. In a through-grade model, are the interim assessments required of all students or can some of the interim assessments be optional?
11. Does the through-grade model provide parents with useful information and do they view the model as an effective way to assess students?

Proof of Concept Design (2015–16 Administration)

To facilitate the answers to the research questions, the proof of concept administration will be designed as specified below:

1. Throughout the proof of concept year, districts will provide input on the processes and the procedures as the study is designed and implemented.

2. In July and early August 2015, teachers and other content experts will convene to recommend which content standards should be assessed on each of the interim assessments and which item types (multiple-choice, gridded, constructed-response and/or writing prompts) would best assess each standard. The NCDPI curriculum staff and the NCDPI testing staff will coordinate and facilitate these meetings.
3. By late July, the NCDPI testing staff will identify a representative sample of schools that reflect statewide student demographics related to ethnicity, gender, previous mean scale score on state tests, and geographic location with a target participation of 3,500–4,500 students each for mathematics (grade 5) and English language arts/reading (grade 6). As much as possible the districts that previously volunteered for the study will be included. Districts will have the opportunity to appeal participation to the State Board of Education (SBE).
4. Professional development on the impact of the instructional timeline will be provided to schools participating in the proof of concept administration in 2015–16.
5. In 2015–16, there will be at least three test administrations during the school year, each representing a subset of the content standards as recommended by the content experts in Number 2 above.
6. Throughout the school year, the participating schools' teachers will be provided with student-level data to inform instruction, and these teachers will have the opportunity to give feedback to the NCDPI on the usefulness of the data and the reports.
7. A fourth assessment that is a shorter version of the end-of-grade (EOG) will fulfill the requirement for reporting end-of-year proficiency levels for participating students, and it will provide growth data for participating teachers and principals for educator effectiveness. However, the reporting of the proficiency information may be delayed due to required analysis.
8. At the conclusion of 2015–16 and the appropriate data analysis, a review of the proof of concept year will provide direction on whether to proceed with a field test in the 2016–17 school year.

Comparability Studies of Existing Interim Assessments

With several school districts currently administering vendor-developed interim assessments, and with at least one of these districts agreeing to provide data, it is possible to conduct a review of the assessments and the related data available from previous end-of-grade administrations. This will allow the state to determine whether commercially-developed assessments are aligned with state summative assessments with respect to coverage of content standards, reliabilities, and validity of reports. School systems will need to submit interim assessment data generated from commercially-developed assessments to determine which of these tests are most closely aligned.

HIGH SCHOOL

Currently, results from three end-of-course tests (Math I, English II, and Biology), The ACT, ACT WorkKeys, Math Course Rigor, and Cohort Graduation Rate are used to report school accountability. As to whether to use a college admissions test such as the ACT for state and federal accountability requirements and to eliminate the EOCs which currently meet this need, it is noted implementation of this model is dependent on the SBE adopting grade level proficiency standards for English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science for The ACT or a similar assessment.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) could be released to gather information on the available instruments that meet the criteria of providing a national comparison as well as alignment to North Carolina content standards and state and federal reporting requirements. A requirement in the RFP would be for the test publisher to provide proficiency standards.

Also, with the unavailability of ACT Explore and ACT Plan in 2016–17 (both currently required by state statute), the RFP would include a requirement for predictive assessments for grade 9 and grade 10.

Given the current specifications for this type of assessment in state statutes, the outcome of the RFP may yield a recommendation to the SBE that would be dependent on legislative action.